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THE MUSICAL AMATEUR



OPERA DI CAMERA.

DIRECT full directions were given in the first number of this journal for the successful rehearsal and performance of a "Kinder-Symphonie," and it was said that among other causes which would recommend this sort of music to ordinary bands of amateurs, there was the prominent one that (except for one or two principal instruments) a comparatively small amount only of executive or musical ability was necessary in order to enable any one satisfactorily to take part in its performance.

The class of music to which the reader's attention is now called presents many more difficulties in its performance; but it is of a higher character, and appeals to one's artistic, and not to one's humorous side. It needs for its performance four (in some cases five, or even six) good singers and a good pianist, and is known as the "Opera di Camera," or "Chamber Opera."

In spite of its Italian title this branch of music is more studied and cultivated in England than anywhere else. There, many of the ladies and gentlemen, titled and otherwise, belonging to the higher circles, are excellent singers, possessing good voices and an amount of vocal cultivation which is rarely found in this country even among professionals; and the production of a "Chamber Opera" is not an uncommon amusement at some of the fine old country mansions during the long fall and winter evenings.

These operas (or operettas, rather) are always so written as to require but one scene for the whole performance, thus doing away with any necessity for complicated stage-machinery. Very frequently the scene is laid in a room, in which case nothing more is necessary than to procure a platform, put up a curtain, and (if possible) arrange a row of lights on the front of the platform, with reflectors so placed that they throw all the light on the stage. These lights answer the double purpose of rendering the stage more bright and of separating more thoroughly the actors from their audience.

There have been lately many operettas written, which, though not calling themselves "Chamber Operas," are fully fitted for use as such. Offenbach's "Rose D'Auvergne," Massé's "Les Noces de Janette," a work called "Cups and Saucers" (the composer's name not now remembered), Offenbach's "Lisichen und Fritzchen," Sullivan's "Cox and Box," and any other of these operettas which are written without chorus and in one scene, will be found useful. If the soprano who essays the work has a high voice and a facile vocal execution, and if she and her companions are willing to work hard, the opera of "Jessy Lea," by Macfarren, may be given. This is probably the most charming "Chamber-Opera" ever written. Libretto

and music are both exquisite. The libretto is by the celebrated John Oxenford, and the music in Macfarren's happiest style. The getting-up of this opera means very hard work, both single and concerted, for every one connected with the matter; but its beauty will more than compensate for the time and labor expended, and the work is so sterling and pleasing that it may be given again and again without losing its interest either for performers or auditors.

An opera must of course be learned by heart, so far as the singers are concerned. This seems very dreadful to those who have never attempted such a feat, but the habit of memorizing is one very quickly formed. The concerted music (duets, trios, quartets, etc.) will be found the most difficult to memorize, the recitatives the next, and the solos (because of their melodic nature) the easiest. Most singers commit the grave mistake of spending the most work on their solos and recitatives, and letting the concerted work go through in any manner that it will without a breakdown. This is a serious fault. No solo, no matter how finely sung, possesses one half the effect of a well-rendered concerted piece. The solo may, and frequently does, draw the immediate applause which the quartet misses; but it is the latter which sinks into the mind and heart, and draws people again and again to hear the same work: for a fine concerted piece well sung never palls, while the best solo after a few hearings becomes tiresome.

But this good rendering of concerted numbers demands, first, artistic self-sacrifice on the part of all the singers, and, second, countless and thorough rehearsals. No soprano or tenor must hold a certain note because it happens to be a favorite one in the voice; no "die-away sentimentality" nor mistaken passion must be allowed to hurry or retard the smooth movement of the music. Every increase or decrease of speed or sound must be made exactly together, and no voice must stand out over the others, save in those rare cases where the composer has so marked for the purpose of obtaining some special effect. Professional operatic artists are usually too selfish to consent to this temporary absorption into a whole with others, and too short-sighted to appreciate the immense gain they would make (in public opinion and favor) by this slight self-denial. Consequently, concerted music in the opera is usually a torture to the musician and a nuisance to the ordinary listener, who feels something wrong and knows not what it is; and when any opera needs shortening for our impatient American public, it is always the concerted music which is slashed out. The Mapleson Italian Opera Company of last winter was a bright exception to the usual rule in this particular, some of their concerted work being given in a manner worthy of the English Glee Club; and its effect on the audience was apparent in the hush that would spread through the house at some exquisitely-rendered trio or quartet, or some delicate chorus—a hush too perfect to be rudely finished by the burst of cheap applause so eagerly sought by shallow-pated and conceited vocalists.

Do not let our amateur friends lose heart because the Mapleson artists have been quoted as a specimen; four very ordinary voices, after proper and conscientious rehearsals, will make a finer effect in a quartet than the four finest artists in the world singing with the usual insufficient opera rehearsals.

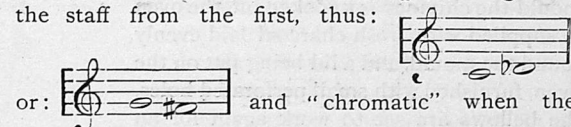
Do not let your acting trouble you. The fault with most amateurs is that they try to act too much. You are not expected to be great actors. In ordinary parts be quiet, as you would be in ordinary life; reserve whatever acting you can do for the situations which really need it, and form your action for those by imbuing your mind thoroughly with the mental situation of the part you are taking, and seeking such actions as will most appropriately and naturally express it. It will be found an immense assistance if you will accustom yourself, when the notes of your part are learned, to *never* singing it without action; your acting will then become so much a second nature

to you that no amount of nervousness at appearing before an audience can possibly take from you all power of moving your arms and legs—a statuesquely uncomfortable experience which has fallen to the lot of more than one lazy or conceited amateur.

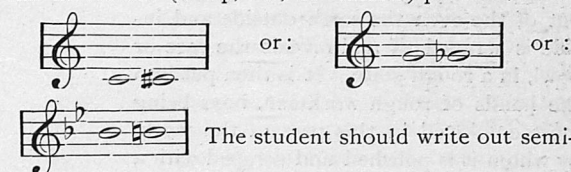
FIRST LESSONS IN HARMONY.

ONE of the first steps in the study of harmony is to familiarize one's self thoroughly with the intervals from note to note, so that, no matter under what guise an interval may be presented, it will be immediately recognized. The simplest way to do this is to study each interval separately, and in every key.

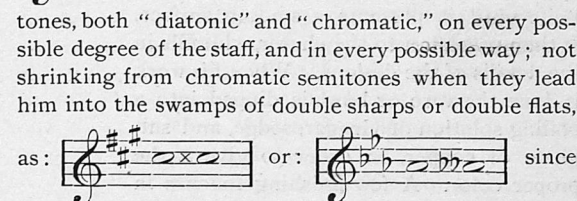
Taking first the semitone, as the smallest recognized interval, we find semitones of two sorts: "diatonic" and "chromatic." We call a semitone "diatonic" when the second note stands on a *different* degree of the staff from the first, thus:



or: and "chromatic" when the second note stands on the *same* degree of the staff as the first, the raising or lowering being effected by an accidental (sharp, flat, or natural) prefixed, thus:

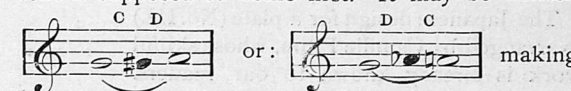


The student should write out semitones, both "diatonic" and "chromatic," on every possible degree of the staff, and in every possible way; not shrinking from chromatic semitones when they lead him into the swamps of double sharps or double flats,



both double sharps and double flats will be found very necessary farther on, and a great assistance in scrambling out of harmonic hobbles.

When the semitone has been sufficiently exercised, the student may proceed to the tone harmonically termed a "second." The "second" consists of one diatonic and one chromatic semitone. In calculating the "second" it makes no difference which semitone is supposed to come first. It may be written



making the C (chromatic) semitone come first, and the D (diatonic) semitone last, or *vice versa*, just as the student pleases.

The end desired (the representation of the interval of a "second") is reached in either case. It may be stated, however, as a rule of general convenience, that it is as well to use sharps for ascending and flats for descending. The student should write out "seconds" in every possible key, and in every possible manner. The more diligently these first steps are studied, the easier will the following steps be found. In the study of any science, a firm and thorough foundation makes the raising of the superstructure little more than play; and the science of harmony is, in this respect, no exception to the rest. If our student will diligently grapple his semitones (both diatonic and chromatic) and his tones, or "seconds," in every form (ascending and descending, chromatic first and diatonic first), for a month or two, he will find himself ready for a much longer step by that time, which step we shall be happy to set before him.

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN'S "THESPIAS."

KATE FIELD, in Scribner's Monthly, gives an amusing sketch of the first work in which Gilbert and Sullivan collaborated, a burlesque entitled "Thespis," written for the comedian Toole, who, having but two notes in his voice, was no easy subject for the composer. However, Sullivan overcame this diffi-

culty, and "Thespis" ran one hundred nights. Of course the plot unfolds a Gilbertian conceit. The gods are supposed to have grown old, and people are dissatisfied. Jupiter's thunder no longer has the true ring. Diana objects to sitting up o' nights. At this juncture, Thespis and his troupe chance upon Mount Olympus; and, as the gods think they'd like to go below and see what is the matter, Thespis assures them that he and his company are equal to regulating the universe. Accordingly the gods retire, Thespis taking Jupiter's place, casting the leading lady for Juno, and his soubrette for Venus. The second act discloses the Thespians in their new rôles. Heaven and earth are convulsed; as Jupiter has turned on rain and forgotten to turn it off, a deluge is imminent; Apollo and Diana, being in love, insist upon going out together; Bacchus has moral scruples against grapes: he is a teetotaler, and will tolerate nothing stronger than ginger-beer. In the midst of topsy-turvy the gods return, dethrone the Thespians, and restore order.



UT one of the numerous original operas promised this season—Max Maretzek's "Sleepy Hollow"—has yet been heard in New York, although "Cadets" and "Buttons" have made unfortunate appearances in other parts of the country.

In all probability this opera will be successful in most places. People always like things with which they are familiar (of course by "people" is meant the general public), and all audiences who have heard opera for a few years past are thoroughly well acquainted with the music of "Sleepy Hollow." Its composition may be called a brilliant effort of memory. The first evening on which I heard this opera I left the Academy of Music with my head in a whirl; I had heard so many composers and had been danced about from one to the other with such rapidity that I was completely confused. Even the play-bill was of no use in settling my ideas. I could not decide whose music I had been hearing, but I knew it was not Maretzek's, except in the sense that he had appropriated it.

It is no wonder it took Mr. Maretzek so long to "find" his opera; the task must have been as difficult as that of reassembling the scraps of a torn letter in the street on a windy day. For example, the search for one phrase of four measures in the first act resulted in discovering two of them in "Semiramide," while the remaining two were secreted in "I Lombardi." Now, when one has to hunt out a whole opera by two and four and six measures at a time among all the ancient and modern composers, it is necessarily the work of years, and Mr. Maretzek is to be congratulated on having reached the conclusion of his tedious work. It is, however, to be wished that he had had a better libretto to which to wed his music. The present one is, in all its versified parts, childish and unpoetic to an exasperating degree.

The concert season opened with Patti and her companions at Chickering Hall. If the old proverb "A bad beginning makes a good ending" be a true one, the present winter should wind up in a musical blaze of glory, for surely this beginning was bad enough. Patti's voice has almost departed, its beauty has gone already, and her tricks of vocalism are stale. They are also cheap to the ears which have heard Di Murska and Gerster.

The pianists are upon us! First comes Mr. Ketten, with Patti, and he was not at all a bad opening; indeed, in some things he was very good. He was, at any rate, by far the best member of that company. Then comes Joseffy, who is now with us and whose name it is dangerous for me to mention, because I immediately want to rhapsodize. Now comes Miss

Gaul, a Baltimore lady, just returned from Europe with immense credentials. Report speaks highly of her; let us hope report is correct. And the list is but commenced!

A great name will do much, but not all. Carlotta Patti has been travelling on her name for a long time; now that, like her voice, is worn threadbare. While her voice had its fresh bloom, people went to hear her and thought her great. She was a Patti, could she be otherwise than fine? But now that bloom has gone, every vocal trick whereby she used to deceive the public into the idea that she had a phenomenal execution stands out boldly and distinctly. The most ordinary listener can now discover that her trill is only a "wobble" on indeterminate notes, that her passages (arpeggio and otherwise) are almost always incorrect in the interior notes, that she frequently sings out of tune, and that every high note has to be a shout; while the musical listener finds out also that she phrases vilely, and has never an artistic conception of the music she attempts.

Of course a scale or a passage will occasionally come out well. A woman cannot keep on trying to sing "fioriture" without sometimes succeeding, no matter how faulty her method; more especially when, as in the case of Mme. Patti, she has plenty of faith in herself, and so does not abnormally stiffen her throat by nervousness. These hap-hazard successes tickle the public, and with her set stage smile and her occasional affectation of archness win her all the little glory she can now gain.

What the impresario of the Patti company saw in the tenor, Mr. Phelps, to induce him to engage him will ever remain a mystery; unless it was his miraculous badness. As a specimen of a man who has neither voice, method, nor taste, and yet has the calm effrontery to present himself to the public as a singer, he is undoubtedly a success; and he might be sent to any museum as a curiosity. The same may be said of the baritone, Signor Ciampi Cellaj, except that Nature did kindly bestow on him a voice; but he strongly resembles Echo, "vox, et præterea—," the quotation is somewhat musty.

Mme. Patti has a husband, and the husband is a violoncellist, and the violoncellist's name is M. de Munck, and M. de Munck is exercising his abilities in the Patti concert company. That reads a little like the "House that Jack Built," but never mind; the present business is not with Jack, but with M. de Munck. He is not to be dismissed in a sentence, and this "Note" will probably be a big one; a "whole note," as it were. In the first place, M. de Munck has a fine instrument; and, in the next place, he plays it technically well. His execution is rapid, clear, and smooth; his intonation pure; his tone excellent; his bow-arm perfect. From end to end his bow is even and firm, and he gives a staccato passage with equal rapidity and sureness in any part of the bow, from point to heel. Here, alas! praise must end. He lacks both true feeling and musical intelligence. In a Servais fantasia he is delightful; in a classic composition he is—well, he is certainly *not* delightful. The purest tone, the most perfect intonation, the most wonderful execution, all fail to compensate for the misery induced by hearing a Chopin waltz ground out in hand-organ style and unyielding rhythm, or a Beethoven sonata reduced to its original elements of bare notes.

I write this "Note" in a whirl of the wildest excitement, for I have just been hearing Joseffy play the E minor concerto of Chopin; with a very badly accompanying orchestra, by the way. Dr. Damrosch conducted himself beautifully, and misdirected the orchestra exasperatingly; and the orchestra assisted his misdirected efforts by blowing like the priests before Jericho in the middle of Joseffy's most *pianissimo* passages.

And Joseffy! Language fails in the task of describing him; but language must collect its energies and give me as much assistance as possible. Briefly it might be said that he has everything; but brevity

has no charms for me in my present condition of admiration. His technique is absolutely perfect. I believe I have read this somewhere before, but I doubt whether it was then advisedly used. I now say it, with all that it can possibly mean. And his technique is only one of his wonderful excellences. He has the conception of an artist, the soul of a poet.

I appeal to all my concert-attending readers who have heard, and remember, the concerto mentioned above, "Did you ever hear the second theme of the last movement (I mean the unharmonized melody for the two hands in unison) so played that it seemed to belong to the composition?" No? I knew it. Neither did I until I heard Joseffy play it. What does he do with it? I will try to tell you. For one thing, he sends it to you in the faintest whisper, just breathes it over the accompanying violins, and lets the end of every phrase die away into nothingness. Then he delivers it in the true "Tempo Rubato," that inexplicable, indescribable effect which is one of the last things an artist attains (most artists never attain it at all), and which gives to the rhythm all the effect of the most fantastic liberty without disturbing the smooth and steady flow of the accompaniment. The result was that this melody, always an annoyance and a disturbance to me before, became one of the greatest delights of the movement, and I waited for its recurrence with an impatience strongly in contrast to the feelings I have usually had towards it.

I always supposed that I had heard a real *pianissimo*. I find now that I never had. Rubinstein came near it; so near, with that velvety softness of his, that I listened and was content. But Joseffy, to a whispering delicacy equal to Rubinstein's, joins an individual "bite" to each note, which Rubinstein lacked. This was especially noticeable in the close of the slow movement, where the piano has two pages of excessively soft rapid execution against sustained melody and harmony in the orchestra. And, exactly in the middle of this pearl-like work, a pig of an orchestra player was seized with a sudden desire to blow the top of his own head off: I wish he had succeeded! I should have liked to assassinate him; it would have been justifiable homicide. Joseffy's rendering of the entire concerto was acknowledged by all to be a revelation, a new conception; and there seemed to be a general impression that the new conception was the correct one. I, for one, would be content always to hear it just so played.

Joseffy is a young man as yet, only twenty-seven years of age; yet there can be but little doubt that this young pianist is one of the greatest masters on his instrument now living. It seems laughable to one who hears him now to think that ten years ago he was hissed in Vienna, and stigmatized by all the musicians and critics as a "pounder," a "thumper." Nevertheless it is true. This poet of pianists, who has now at command the most fairy-like cobweb tracery of ornamentation, ten years ago banged like any muscular quadrille player. He had then an execution which was phenomenal, but had the common idea that the chief end and aim of man—when that man is a solo pianist—was *noise*; and he made plenty. Fortunately, though young, he was not conceited. He even conceived it possible, finding that every acknowledged musician and critic found the same fault in him, that he might be in error; and he went to Tausig to find out. How thoroughly he has found out let those who now hear him play decide; and I advise every one who has anything to do with piano to hear him. There is not a single pianist in this country, professional or amateur (and we have excellent ones in both classes), who cannot learn, and learn much, from this young Hungarian.

CARYL FLORIO.

NEW MUSIC.

THE TURKISH PATROL is the title of an extremely pleasing composition which is being played now by the orchestras at the theatres, and is encored with as much regularity as was "Grandfather's Clock" last year. It is published by Brentano, who also sends us that quaint old English composition, "The Clang of the Wooden Shoon," a charming song for a contralto or mezzo-soprano voice of moderate range.